THE ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES OF THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

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1936

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

EXHIBITION OF ENGLISH OMESTIC METALWORK

THIS exhibition, the third of a series arranged by the Council for Art and Industry in collaboration with the Victoria and Albert Museum, is intended show the historical and artistic development of base-etal implements connected with the English home d fireside.

Its scope is mainly limited to objects connected ith cooking, lighting, heating, tobacco-smoking and riting; it also includes door- and window-fittings and small number of miscellaneous pieces.

The most conspicuous exhibit is a model of a large pen hearth, in which are shown adjustable cranes, fire-ogs, spit, spit-jack and all the old-time apparatus for ooking. It will be noticed that these have now become bsolete, their work having been taken over by com-aratively modern successors, electric and gas cookers, examples of which are shown on either side of them.

Another interesting comparison is shown between he late 18th century Adam fire-grate, with its detach-ble burnished front, and the modern marble and rust-less steel fire-place at the side of it, each a fine and typical example of its period.

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In the two cases devoted to lighting-apparatus are shown various types of rush-holders and candlesticks, including a number of modern examples of the latter, also various forms of ignition including tinder-boxes with flint and steel, a flint-lock pistol tinder-box and a modern gas-poker for lighting a coal-fire without wood or paper.

Among the cooking implements are skillets (one with its handle inscribed "YE. WAGES. OF. SIN. IS. DEATH,") and a modern electric saucepan; another interesting contrast is that between the elegant toasting-fork of 1728 and the modern electric toaster.

When we come to tobacco-smoking, we find smoker's tongs superseded by the modern pocket lighter or the match ash-tray, in which the match is ignited by pulling it from the holder. A curious exhibit is a tinned iron pipe which must have given a particularly hot smoke.

In the same case are shown a pipe-rack with candle and spills, such as was used in country inns, also a pipe-kiln which held used clay pipes when placed in the fire to burn them clean.

Among the door-fittings are shown three fine brass rim-locks of the second half of the 17th century alongside a number of handles and other fittings used with the modern "mortise" or concealed lock. On the other side of the same case is an 18th century lattice window which contrasts very strongly with the large modern window exhibited next to it.

In another case may be seen a pair of wafering-irons next to their modern equivalent, the electric

waffle-plate ; and, side by side, a box-iron, a goffering-iron and an electric iron.

The selection of the modern examples has been the work of a sub-committee appointed for that purpose, on which Mr. F. V. Burridge, Mr. J. Seymour Lindsay, Mr. Hugh Roberts and Mr. L. S. Thoday were kind enough to serve. The thanks of the Committee are due to the following firms who have generously assisted their object by lending the modern exhibits : Messrs. Bratt Colbran, The Gas Light and Coke Company, The General Electric Company, The Birmingham Guild, Messrs. Osler & Faraday, Messrs. Heal & Son, Messrs. Harrods, Messrs. Best & Lloyd, and Messrs. Henry Hope & Sons ; the older examples have, with two exceptions, been chosen from those exhibited in the Museum, including a few objects which were shown there as loans.

It will be seen that the exhibition is in the nature of an experiment, and there is no doubt that it could have been considerably expanded but for the limited space at the disposal of the Committee. At the same time it is hoped that, in addition to drawing attention to a certain amount of fine traditional work that has now become obsolete, it will also illustrate the change of manners and fashions resulting from more modern inventions.

It will be found that the objects have been labelled individually and very fully with definite regard to the purposes of the exhibition.

April to June, 1936